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Newsline

Newsletter of the Montana Department of Transportation Rail, Transit & Planning Division

June 2006

Beartooth All-American Road Opens for Summer Travel

Boosters celebrated the seasonal opening of the Beartooth Highway (U.S. 212) May 27 in Red Lodge with food, entertainment, and a spirit of optimism. Because of severe winter weather, the highway is normally closed from mid-October to late May. The opening day celebration, hosted by Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road, has become an annual event in Red Lodge. Last year, massive mudslides closed the highway just before the start of the summer tourist season making this year's celebration especially festive.

The mudslides damaged the roadway at 13 sites resulting in one of the largest emergency repair efforts ever undertaken by MDT. Thanks to innovative in-the-field engineering and a cooperative effort involving MDT, FHWA, and Montana's congressional delegation, repairs were completed last October ahead of schedule and under the projected cost.

On April 21, MDT Director Jim Lynch traveled to the Beartooth Highway to see for himself how repairs held up over the winter. Pictured with Mr. Lynch is Kyle DeMars, MDT Red Lodge Section Supervisor.

The U.S. Department of Transportation designated the Beartooth Highway an All-American Road in June 2002. The title recognizes the highway's unique beauty and status as a "destination unto itself."

Tri-Party Gathering Works to Improve Traffic Safety on Reservations

The first Traffic Safety Tri-party Gathering was held in April to discuss traffic safety behavioral issues on Montana reservations. Representatives from the Montana Department of Transportation met with tribal law enforcement and tribal council members from the Blackfeet, Chippewa Cree, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne, Confederated Salish and Kootenai, and Little Shell nations. Representatives from the Montana Highway Patrol, the Governor's Office, the Federal Highway Administration, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also took part.

With support from tribal leaders, positive strides were made in moving toward developing an agreement that would lead to a statewide effort to reduce traffic fatalities in Montana. An integral part of this is for each tribe to acknowledge that traffic safety is an important issue on tribal lands.

While Native Americans make up approximately 6.2 percent of Montana's population, they represented 19.7 percent of Montana motor vehicle fatalities in 2004. Key to reducing fatalities is increasing safety belt usage. Between 2003 and 2005, 92 percent of Native Americans killed in traffic accidents in Montana were not wearing safety belts; and of those fatalities, 93.6 percent were alcohol-related.

A number of recommendations resulted from the meeting including encouraging all tribal governments to develop their own comprehensive safety plan. This will strengthen traffic safety coordination on reservations and improve access to grant funds.

Safe Routes to School

MDT serving you with pride

Coming Soon! MDT is developing a new Safe Routes to School Program that will support efforts to improve student safety at or near Montana's elementary and middle schools. Watch for future *Newsline* articles about this new program or visit *http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/saferoutes/* for more information.

2006 Highway Map Now Available

The new 2006 Montana Highway Map is the second in the series of Lewis and Clark Commemorative Edition maps celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Corps of Discovery's historic journey through Montana.

The map continues to showcase Montana's major urban and tourist destination areas and provides information on the six tourism regions that highlight the different landscapes and attractions across the state. Also listed are the national signature events surrounding the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, including places to visit along the trail.

The map has 75 layers of information and shows over 25,000 miles of roads and 566 cities and towns. It continues to display traffic regulations; weather report, road condition, and emergency phone numbers; Montana's state symbols; and a welcome message from Governor Schweitzer.

To order your copy of the new map, call 800-VISIT MT (800-847-4868) or visit the Web at *http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps*.

First Lady Nancy Schweitzer Unveils MDT's First Geological Marker

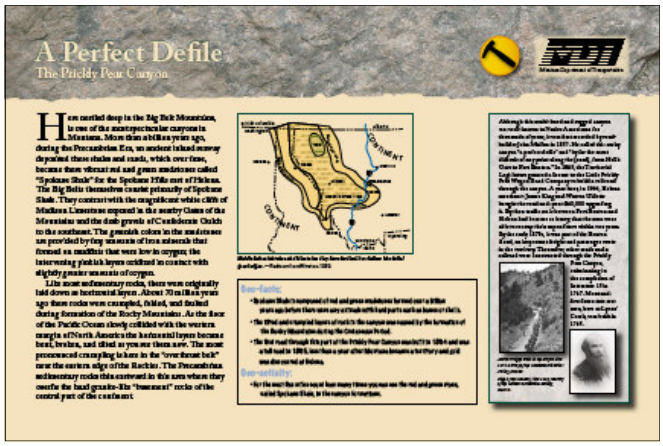
With the help of Helena schoolchildren, Jim Lynch and Nancy Schweitzer unveiled Montana's first geological marker at the Lyon's Creek parking area in Wolf Creek Canyon.

On June 8, First Lady Nancy Schweitzer and MDT Director Jim Lynch, along with students of various ages, celebrated the kick-off of MDT's new geological marker program. The sign, located north of Helena at Lyon's Creek parking area on Interstate 15, is the first of 15 geological markers to be installed along Montana highways.

"Science is exciting and full of discovery," said Mrs. Schweitzer. "The geological road signs are a way to enjoy science as a family and to learn about so many of the natural wonders of Montana."

Montana's colorful history includes stories told through geology. Each interpretive sign explains geologic wonders of the Treasure State, as well as a bit of Montana history. The markers also suggest a "geo-activity" for motorists as they travel through the area. The program serves to spark an interest in geology, supporting the Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative, which encourages students in Montana to discover the wonders of Montana.

The markers are a collaboration between MDT; Dr. Donald Hyndman, co-author of the popular book *Roadside Geology of Montana*; renowned Montana paleontologist Jack Horner; the Montana State University Geology Department; and geologist Dr. David Baker of Monarch, Montana.



Montana's first geological roadside marker, "A Perfect Defile: The Prickly Pear Canyon," explains the origins of the colorful red and green mudstones visible along Interstate 15 just north of Helena in Wolf Creek Canyon. The marker also includes information on the history of the roadway and a "geo-activity" for travelers.

"With some 11 billion miles traveled on Montana's public roads each year, these roadside markers are a great way to enhance travel for Montanans and our guests," said Jim Lynch. MDT is installing markers at existing rest areas, parking areas, and pull-outs.

Signs are scheduled for installation in the coming weeks at the Columbus Rest Area on Interstate 90 and the Alberton parking area on I-90 west of Alberton. The remaining interpretive signs will be installed by the end of summer.

Boxing Knapweed

This is the insectary at Harrison in 2004. Note the metal flashing used to confine the insects. Photo by Todd Breitenfeldt.

Spotted knapweed has been overtaking rangeland in the western United States and Canada since the late 1800s. This native of Central Europe and Asia was introduced to North America in contaminated crop seed and discarded ship ballast. It is now found in every county in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. An aggressive invader, it adapts well to a wide range of habitats displacing native plants, reducing wildlife and livestock forage, and increasing soil erosion. In Montana, spotted knapweed is estimated to cause $42 million in damage to agriculture and wildlands every year.

MDT is taking a new approach to knocking out spotted knapweed. Currently, the Department is helping eight K–12 school systems build insectaries where students can cultivate insects to kill spotted knapweed. The students hand harvest the insects and release them along highways and adjoining areas infected with spotted knapweed. MDT has obligated $35,000 to purchase and release the insects within select counties and to develop insectaries at participating schools.

Whitehall students collect root-boring weevils along the edge of their insectary in 2003. Photo by Todd Breitenfeldt.

Boxing Knapweed continued . . .

The school systems currently involved are the Townsend School District; Bonner Junior High; Victor and Whitehall High Schools; Seeley Lake; and the Darby, Noxon, and Eureka County public schools. MDT is providing each participating school system $2,500 a year for two years. Whitehall's program includes training for educators and is therefore receiving $5,000 a year for two years.

The schools are using root-boring weevils (Cyphocleonus achates) and seedhead weevils (Larinus minutus) as their ammunition. The insectaries are approximately 100 feet by 30 feet and are enclosed with metal flashing. The flashing is inserted four inches into the ground and extends eight inches above it. Students plant knapweed within the flashing and release purchased insects inside. Dan Williams, MDT Maintenance Division, estimated that the female insects will lay 100 larvae annually, and the surviving insects will multiply 90 times.

> "Transportation corridors serve as a critical avenue for introduction, establishment, and spread of weeds throughout Montana . . . . A study conducted on spotted knapweed by Montana State University indicated that a vehicle driven several feet through a knapweed site acquires up to 2000 seeds . . . . These seeds are dispersed along highways, with about 200 seeds remaining on a vehicle after driving 10 miles."
>
> *MDT Statewide Roadside Vegetation Management Plan 2006–2011*

After the insects have matured, the students capture and release them along infested roadways and fields. They monitor progress using photographs of the area and a GPS system to locate the sites. The GPS system also allows students to return to the site later to monitor the progress of the insects and their effectiveness.

According to Williams, many landowners are jumping at the opportunity for students to release the insects near their property. The insects are host-specific and feed solely on knapweed.

Root-boring weevils kill knapweed by burrowing into the plant's root system and eating the root. The seedhead weevils land on the plant's blossoms and lay larvae on the seeds. The larvae, when hatched, feed on the florets and seeds of the plant.

These two insect species are the same ones that help keep spotted knapweed under control in Asia, where it is believed to have originated. By reintroducing the insects to knapweed in Montana, MDT hopes to help balance the plant ecosystem.

The biological approach is a "slowly but surely" method because as the insects travel, they kill knapweed and inhibit future growth. Chemical herbicides, although immediately effective, kill only the sprayed weeds, and the chemicals do not spread beyond that specific area.

Williams explains that MDT can spray and kill knapweed along highways, but if the adjacent landowner is not able to continue controlling the knapweed, it will simply redevelop.

Knapweed is considered Montana's number one problem weed. It spreads rapidly as seeds hitch rides on vehicles, humans, animals, wind, and water. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for seven to ten years.

MDT uses a number of methods to manage every problem weed and is excited about the interest these schools are showing in the fight against knapweed.

Although biological weed control is not immediately effective, Williams believes it will be incredibly efficient in the long run. "It is a great way to educate youth and employ another method of control, instead of depending solely on herbicides," he said.

MDT's Statewide Roadside Vegetation Management Plan is available on the Internet at *http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/weed_mgmt_plan.pdf*. For more information, contact Dan Williams at 444-7604 (*dawilliams@mt.gov*).

Spotted knapweed is a member of the sunflower family. It has a deep taproot and produces abundant flowers that range in color from pink to purple. A single plant can yield 1,000 seeds. The dark fringe on the tips of the bracts under the petals creates the spotted appearance that gives this plant its name.

Root—boring weevils are widespread in Europe where they help keep knapweed under control. The brown and gray mottled insects are a little over 1/2 inch long and feed only on spotted and diffuse knapweed. Although adults will eat knapweed leaves, they do the most harm in their larval stage when they feed on the plant's taproot.

Seedhead weevils are extremely effective in destroying knapweed seed during their larval stage. They overwinter in ground litter emerging in late spring. The brown-gray weevils are a little less than 1/4 inch long with a large bulbous snout. Like their root-boring cousins, seedhead weevils feed exclusively on spotted and diffuse knapweed.

White Sulphur Springs Children Learn Cycling Skills at the Bicycle Roadeo

Members of the Christian Motorcycle Association performed mechanical checks on participants' bicycles.

Overcast skies did not discourage children in White Sulphur Springs from participating in the third annual Bicycle Safety Roadeo held Saturday, May 20, at the Meagher County Courthouse.

The roadeo is sponsored by the Born Again Bikers Chapter of the Christian Motorcycle Association (CMA).

Thirty children participated in the event, which began as a local ministry and outreach program. The roadeo has grown to include bicycle skill-building and education.

CMA members signed in children, recorded bicycle registration numbers, performed bicycle maintenance checks, and fitted helmets. Following registration, children listened to instructions and then practiced various bicycle skills. These skills included "riding the plank," which required the cyclists to ride their bicycles along a straight, marked line; approaching and obeying stop signs; quick-stopping within a box; riding in circles; and using hand signals. Other activities included an obstacle course and a "slow race" where the object was to maintain control of the bicycle at the slowest possible speed.

Meagher County Undersheriff Jon Lopp spoke to the children about bicycle laws, rules of the road, and safe places to ride.

Born Again Bikers purchased three bicycles as drawing prizes and provided helmets for children who did not have them.

CMA has received great community support in providing bicycle safety information to the children of White Sulphur Springs. Local businesses featured the prizes in their stores. Stageline Pizza and Theatre, Edward's Grocery, Mile High Supply, Spa Motel and Hot Springs, Happy Days Cafe, and the Truck Stop Cafe provided a variety of vouchers and coupons including swim passes, pizza coupons, and ice-cream cone vouchers.

As the skies cleared on a beautiful afternoon, sponsors drew names for prizes, including the highly anticipated bicycles. Following the festivities, many of the participants had an opportunity to practice their new skills during a quick sprint to the cafe to redeem their ice-cream cone vouchers.

For more information on bicycle and pedestrian safety, contact Pam Langve-Davis, MDT's bicyclist and pedestrian coordinator, at 444-9273 or *plangvedavis@mt.gov.*

Above left, a youngster exits the obstacle course at the White Sulphur Springs Bicycle Safety Roadeo. At right, another participant practices controlling his bike as he "rides the plank."

Audrey Allums Picked to Head Transit Section

MDT Transit Section Supervisor Audrey Allums

Audrey Allums was recently chosen to supervise MDT's Transit Section. In her new position she will be responsible for developing and administering Montana's transit programs.

Audrey grew up on a farm outside of Flandreau, South Dakota, and graduated from Chadron State College in Nebraska with a bachelor's degree in Education for Political Science and Communications. She is currently working on a master's degree in transportation policy, operations, and logistics from George Mason University.

Audrey began her career in public service in 1986 as an EMT trainer in South Dakota. She quickly moved to a grants management position in the state's Highway Safety Office and in 1991 moved to Montana to take a similar position. Over the next 13 years, she worked in various positions at the Department of Justice. She was the state Juvenile Justice Specialist for four years overseeing federal grant funds for juvenile crime and delinquency prevention. For the last two years, she has worked in the MDT Highway Traffic Safety Office coordinating funding and resources to reduce traffic fatalities.

"I am truly looking forward to the move to the Transit Program," Audrey says. "This is a wonderful opportunity to work with a great staff to provide services for the people of Montana."

For more information on MDT's transit programs, contact Audrey at 444-4210 or *aallums@mt.gov*.

Composting Road Kill

Road kill is not only an unpleasant sight for motorists—it's also a disposal problem for MDT's Maintenance Division. In the Bitterroot Valley alone, as many as 600 to 700 deer are killed along the roads each year.

For many years, MDT has had an agreement with Fish, Wildlife and Parks that allows the Department to haul deer carcasses to remote areas for natural decomposition. However, increased development has reduced the number of places that are out of the public eye where MDT can take the carcasses. In addition, the cost of hauling the deer to landfills is approximately $135 per trip, and trucks sometimes make four trips a week.

For the past year, MDT has been working on a new approach to cleaning up Montana's roadsides—composting deer carcasses rather than land-filling them. Composting reduces the costs associated with disposal and uses up other waste material. The compost can then be used as starter material for new composting bins. MDT is exploring other possible uses for the compost.

To get the project rolling, Doug Moeller, MDT's Missoula maintenance chief, traveled to Maine last spring to learn about a composting process used in some eastern states. When he returned, he and other MDT employees worked hand-in-hand with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality; Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Ravalli County to develop the safest composting process available.

The procedure involves embedding deer carcasses in wood chips, sawdust, chipped tree trimmings, and other similar bulking materials within encased bins atop an asphalt mat. The process generates internal temperatures of 150 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, even in winter.

The composting takes an average of 90 to 120 days to complete, and the material has to be turned at least once during that time. Outside temperatures and moisture are major factors in the time it takes to complete the cycle. The process is nearly odorless, and MDT has not had any problems with scavengers or predators.

Currently, the only composting site in Montana is located north of Victor on MDT property. The site is over 300 feet from the highway and nearly one-half mile from residences and other commercial property. MDT hopes to expand the program throughout Montana to decrease the number of deer carcasses going to landfills.

Only a handful of states in the U.S. compost road kill, and, according to Moeller, Montana is the first state west of the Mississippi to be involved.

In upcoming months, the Department of Environmental Quality will issue an environmental document that will be available for public comment.

For more information, contact Doug Moeller at 523-5803 (*dmoeller@mt.gov*) or Cora Helm at 444-7659 (*cohelm@mt.gov*).

CTEP Spotlight

CTEP Guideline Manual and Application to Be Updated

It's that time again . . . the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) is updating the CTEP Guidelines Manual and project application form. The updates are due in part to new Federal Highway (FHWA) Enhancement Guidelines issued in January 2006 and also to changes in Montana law. CTEP is in the process of hiring a consultant to complete this work, and the goal is to have these new products ready in about a year. Customers and users of the manual and application who have ideas or suggestions for improvements can contact Mike Wherley at 444–4221 or *mwherley@mt.gov*.

So, what are the changes in the FHWA Enhancement Guidelines? The changes are few and are the result of language in the new transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU). The following summary is taken directly from the FHWA Enhancement Guidance Web site found at *http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/guidance.htm*.

- **Activity C** added *including historic battlefields* to clarify existing eligibility. Because historic battlefields were already eligible, there is no additional guidance.
- **Activity H** replaced *"thereof"* with *"of the corridors"* (it did not change eligibility).
- **Activity I** inserted *Inventory* before *Control and Removal of Outdoor Advertising* to clarify existing eligibility.

Eligible categories remain the same with the following exceptions (new legislation is in italics):

- Acquisition of scenic easement and scenic or historic sites (*including historic battlefields).*
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and *use of the* corridors for pedestrian or bicycle trails).
- *Inventory*, control and removal of outdoor advertising.

One noticeable change in the CTEP project application form is that proximity to a highway or transportation facility alone will no longer be sufficient to determine project eligibility. Thus, the fact that a historic building is adjacent to a highway will not in itself make that building eligible for a CTEP project—there must be some other relationship to surface transportation. The new CTEP application form will reflect this requirement.

The CTEP staff is excited about the upcoming revisions to the manual and application. Not only will these changes be a big help to them, but more importantly, the manual and application will be better and more user-friendly for their customers—the local and tribal governments of Montana.

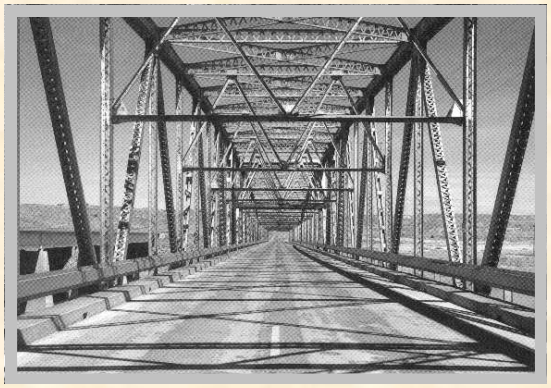
Montana's Historic Bridges

Part 3

by Jon Axline, MDT Historian

The Second World War caused a brief respite to the Montana Highway Department's road and bridge programs because of material shortages and the federal government's focus on the war effort. Beginning in 1948; however, road and bridge building expanded again as the post-war economic boom, commercial trucking, recreational tourism, and the Cold War created need for improved roads and bridges. The boom culminated in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 which created the Interstate highway system.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, the highway commissioners canceled all bridge projects scheduled for construction. Only those projects essential to national defense were authorized by the War Department. Unless the highways or bridges were located on the Strategic Highway Network, the War Department would not sanction the expenditure of federal funds. In Montana, only projects on U.S. Highways 10 and 91 fell into that category. The military retained strict control of steel, restricting its use for projects deemed essential to the war effort.



When the Fallon Bridge over the Yellowstone River opened in November 1944, area residents celebrated with a high school band concert. It is the longest continuous-span bridge in Montana.

Despite the best intentions of the highway department to economize during the war, Mother Nature threw it a curve ball in March 1943 when ice destroyed the Yellowstone River Bridge at Fallon. The force of the jam was so enormous it sheered off all three concrete piers and carried three of the bridge's four spans downstream. Because the War Department had designated Highway 10 a strategically important highway, it pushed for the construction of a new bridge as soon as possible. By June 1943, the highway department's engineers had designed a continuous-span through-truss to replace the old bridge.

The commission awarded the contract to the Billings-based William P. Roscoe Company in October 1943. Few men have had as big an impact on Montana's construction industry as Bill Roscoe. For thirty years from 1926 to 1956, he built more bridges in Montana than any other contractor employed by the highway department. Although he specialized in the construction of large steel bridges, Roscoe also built reinforced concrete and timber bridges across the state. In fact, Roscoe had supervised the construction of the first Fallon Bridge in 1914 while employed by the Security Bridge Company.

The new Fallon Bridge took over a year to complete and was plagued by labor and steel shortages, high water, and inclement weather. Roscoe hired men from the Crow Reservation to help pour the concrete piers and subcontracted with a Texas company to erect the steel trusses. In July 1944, the *Terry Tribune* wrote of the construction that "To a spectator who likes to have both feet planted firmly on the earth, the sight of the steel crew high up in the air erecting and attaching the steel beams is quite a thrill. The top of the spans are 70 feet above the ground and the men walk around the 'I' beams 21 inches in width and on the cross beams nine inches wide as nonchalantly as if traveling on a broad highway."

Roscoe opened the bridge for traffic on November 22, 1944, about one year after construction began on the structure. The massive five-span continuous through-truss bridge contains nearly 1,167 tons of structural steel; and at 1,149-feet long, it remained the longest Yellowstone River bridge in Montana until surpassed by the 2,013-foot bridge on Interstate 94 immediately adjacent to it in 1968. At about the same time, the highway department completed a five-span steel truss bridge across the Powder River on U.S. 10, about seven miles southeast of Terry. Also built by the Roscoe Company, the Powder River Bridge was the last truss bridge built by the Montana Highway Department.

When victory against the Axis powers was imminent, Congress passed the Federal Highway Act of 1944, which provided the foundation for the $1.5 billion post-war highway-building boom. The act created the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and put more emphasis on roads and bridges in urban areas and on secondary highways, which had been largely neglected during the 1930s.

Many of the Montana Highway Department's early post-war projects included the construction of large girder and steel stringer bridges over the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Clearwater, Musselshell, and Madison Rivers. Steel girders replaced trusses as the material of choice for river crossings in the late 1940s. Unlike steel truss bridges, girder spans were cheaper to construct and did not have overhead restrictions for commercial trucks. For shorter spans, the highway department continued to rely on timber bridges to cross smaller streams and drainages in eastern Montana.

Many of the big bridges designed and built by the Montana Highway Department after World War II were located near the state's major urban centers to improve access from the surrounding rural areas and to improve trade networks between Montana's cities and towns. One of the most important of the urban projects was a new bridge across the Missouri River at Great Falls—a bridge that had a profound im-

pact on the city, permanently altering its pattern of development by creating a new entrance. Before 1951, Tenth Avenue South consisted of a scattering of warehouses, tourist cabin camps, auto repair shops, and houses. Within a decade after the completion of the bridge, this street in the "Electric City" transformed into one the state's busiest thoroughfares, lined with stores, service stations, restaurants, and, by 1959, one Montana's first shopping malls. Where Tenth Avenue South once dead-ended at the Missouri River, it now provided access to two major highways and Malmstrom Air Force Base.

In June 1949, the highway commission awarded a contract to the Anderson Construction Company of Great Falls to build a combination steel-girder and reinforced-concrete structure over the Missouri River and the Great Northern Railway at the west end of Tenth Avenue South. At over $1.7 million, it was the most expensive bridge built by the highway department up to that time. The 2,093-foot bridge consists of six steel girder main spans and twenty-one steel stringer approach spans. The approaches rest on reinforced concrete hammerhead piers, the first of that design built in Montana.

The Pugsley Bridge, which crosses the Marias River south of Chester, features an innovative cable-stay suspension system. It is the only bridge of its kind in the United States.

Governor John Bonner suggested naming the new bridge for Oliver S. Warden, former publisher of the *Great Falls Tribune* and a tireless advocate of improved roads and bridges while a member of the highway commission from 1924 to 1936. Warden's widow, Eleanor, and son, Jock, cut the ribbon to the structure in September 1951, opening what would be one of the most important bridges built in Montana during the twentieth century. The bridge provided a new entrance to Great Falls off U.S. Highway 91 (and later Interstate 15) and facilitated the shipment of goods between eastern and western Montana via Montana Highway 200. The bridge best symbolizes the optimism and prosperity of the highway department's bridge programs after the war.

During the fifties, many counties replaced old bridges that were not eligible for federal replacement funds. Because of the lack of money, the counties were obliged to seek innovative ways to provide good bridges for their citizens. In 1947 ice mostly destroyed a bridge across the Marias River south of Chester. The Liberty County Commissioners began plans to replace the old bridge without the use of federal funds and hired the Billings engineering firm of T. H. Hurdle and Sons to design it.

To keep costs down, engineer Tom Hurdle developed an innovative braced chain-type suspension system for the new bridge rather than the traditional wire cables used on other suspension bridges. The system precluded the need for river piers and kept the cost of the new structure within the county's budget. The new bridge also used portions of the original 1914 structure in its design, including the concrete abutments and one of the approach span piers.

Tom Hurdle began construction of the suspension bridge in September 1949 with his brother Willard supervising a crew of eight men—all county employees. According to Tom Hurdle, equipment used to construct the bridge included only a "backhoe, concrete mixer, two-drum hoist . . . winch truck, compressor, and welding equipment." Completed in July 1951 and named for local rancher, Leonard Pugsley, the bridge consists of three spans with the main 290-foot span supported by cables suspended from two 51-foot tall anchor towers. The steel cables are anchored to concrete blocks thirty-two-feet long and six-feet thick at each end of the bridge. The Pugsley Bridge is the only one of its kind in the United States, and the Hurdle Company was so proud of it that a profile of the bridge graced the company's stationery for many years.

The crowning achievement of the Montana Highway Department's bridge program during the 1950s was the Missouri River Bridge between Malta and Grass Range. Later designated the Fred Robinson Bridge by grateful residents for the man who worked so hard to get it built, the bridge was the most expensive and prominent structure built in Montana during the decade. The culmination of an effort that began in 1920 by residents of central Montana, it provided a river crossing that encouraged economic development of the region. At that time, other than six ferries, which operated only seasonally, there was no river crossing between Fort Benton and Fort Peck, a distance of some 430 river miles.

After years of studies, several structural designs, and the acquisition of funds to build it, the State Highway Commission awarded a contract to construct the Missouri River Bridge to the Wyoming-based N. A. Nelson Construction Company in late October 1956. The construction of the bridge proved a logistical nightmare for the contractor as the site was located thirty-one miles from the nearest railroad terminal at Roy. Building material had to be trucked in over a road that was "mostly a trail of the worst kind of gumbo imaginable." The materials could only be hauled in during periods of dry weather. Nelson established a trailer camp at the bridge site for workers, drilled a well, laid water and sewer pipes, and built a small electric light plant. Despite the amenities, the contractor's superintendent later stated that he "had more trouble keeping experienced men on the job than on any job he [had] ever built." By working two eight-hour shifts per day, the company completed the bridge's substructure in December 1957.

The structural steel did not arrive in Roy until early June 1958—after a delay of nearly six months. Because the roads were nearly impassable, the contractor could not begin trucking the steel to the construction site until late in the month. The bridge finally opened for traffic in March 1959; the final cost of the structure was $716,633.75.

Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.

MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit *http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf*, or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to *mdtnewprojects@mt.gov*.

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Inside This Issue

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Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-3423, TTY (800)335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

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